

## Sunday School

### PAUL A PRISONER BEFORE FELIX.

Acts 24: 10-17. Lesson for October 17, 1909.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—"Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Acts 24: 16.

#### DAILY HOME READING.

M.—Acts 24: 1-16.                      Thur.—Hebrews 13: 13-21.  
T.—Acts 24: 17-27.                    F.—2 Cor. 4: 1-7.  
W.—Romans 15: 17-27.                S.—Isa. 41: 8-14.  
   S.—Isa. 50: 5-11.

#### SHORTER CATECHISM.

Q. 77. What is required in the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment requireth the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbor's good name, especially in witness-bearing.

#### TOPICAL OUTLINE.

Paul's defence of himself before Felix the Governor. Vs. 10-12.

The action of Felix with reference to him. Verses 22, 23.

Paul further instructs Felix and Drusilla. Verses 24-27.

#### LESSON COMMENT.

**Introductory.**—In the last lesson we learned of the safe conduct of Paul to Felix the governor of the Roman province of Judea at Caesarea. This was an important town on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, between Mount Carmel and Joppa. Herod the Great, writers inform us, spent large sums of money to beautify it. Vespasian, who was declared emperor there, made it a Roman colony. Cornelius and Philip lived in Caesarea and Herod Agrippa died in that city. "The contest between the heathen and Jewish inhabitants of the place in regard to their equal right to the privilege belonging to citizens was the beginning of the Jewish war which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem." (Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia.) When Paul had been in Caesarea five days, Amos, the high priest, some elders and a lawyer followed him and prosecuted him before Felix. Tertullus accused him of being a dangerous citizen; a disturber of the peace among the Jews in the Roman empire; a leader of the followers of Jesus, the Nazarene, and of profaning the temple in Jerusalem. He further represented to Felix that the Jews had made an effort to judge him according to their law; but Lysias had violently prevented them, commanding them to carry their case to the governor, that he might examine the prisoner for himself in reference to these accusations. He also said that Annas and the elders who accompanied him agreed with him in these statements.

**Comment.**—The first eleven verses in the text of the lesson are devoted to the convincing defense of Paul in the presence of Felix and his prosecutors. The governor having signified his willingness to hear the apostle plead his own cause, he skillfully and truthfully commends himself to the powers that were in control, by expressing his satisfaction that he was to be tried by a governor, who had been in authority for six years, and was not, therefore, an inexperienced judge. He then proceeded to show the fallacy of the speech of the advocate, and state the facts in negative and positive form. He begins by saying, that Felix had every opportunity of knowing that he had been in the country only a short time, and that he had come to Jerusalem to worship in the temple and not create a disturbance. The could "easily ascertain these things by inquiry." "There could be no difficulty in obtaining witnesses and proofs." He challenged the statement that he had had any controversy in the temple, and that he had stirred up the people on the streets or in the city, or in the synagogue; and boldly asserted that they could not prove these allegations. He confessed that he worshiped God as his fathers did, and that he believed everything in the Old Testament Scriptures. "He had not apostatized from the Jewish religion." "The national hope referred to, even here, was the hope of the Messiah, and the resurrection, here connected with it, that of Christ Himself, but represented as the pledge and foretaste of a general rising, here expressed by saying, 'both of the just and unjust,' that

is, of all kinds and characters without exception. The three points of adherence, then, to ancient doctrines, here alleged by Paul, are one God, one Scripture, one Messiah."

Paul's address made some impression upon the mind of Felix; and having a better understanding of the Christian religion and of Paul, its representative, he postponed final action until Lysias would come and he could ascertain all the facts in the case from him, probably as a judge. He allowed Paul some liberties under the supervision of a centurion, and did not forbid his acquaintances to visit him and minister to his needs. "Paul was kept in prison for two years.

Some time after these things, Felix returned to Caesarea with the Jewess, Drusilla, whom he had persuaded to leave her own husband, Aziz, and follow him. Felix was once himself a slave and "according to Josephus, he was one of the most corrupt and oppressive governors ever dispatched from Rome to Judea." We are told that Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I, who died in Caesarea in horrible torments (Acts 12: 23); that she was very beautiful; that she was unfaithful to her husband, and that she perished in the eruption of Vesuvius that destroyed Pompeii. This was the audience Paul addressed at the request of the governor, which was made probably for the sake of Drusilla. The old man trembled as Paul reasoned of right dealings with others, self-control and a coming judgment; but he did not cherish these impressions and postponed to another time any further conference about morals. He expected Paul to pay him for his liberty and frequently sent for the apostle to confer with him. But his conscience was never again aroused, so far as the record informs us. After two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix, and the latter, as a stroke of policy, left Paul in prison to please the Jews. "That unjust judge 'was willing,' not to do what was right, but to show the Jews a pleasure."—Kitto.

**Doctrinal and Practical.**—(1) What a radical difference there is between a lover of truth and fairness and a paid advocate! The difference is illustrated by Paul and Tertullus. Trial by jury in our country is one of the benefits of a Christian civilization; but justice in the courts frequently miscarries, because unscrupulous lawyers and judges insist on technicalities or manufacture evidence or postpone cases. Many a witness is guilty of perjury and many a jury is packed. We believe, however, that there has been some improvement in the courts of justice in recent years. But a lawyer who practices primarily for money is as bad as a hireling in the ministry.

(2) Christianity is a development of Judaism. The church is the same in all ages; the same in its Head, law, sacraments and conditions of salvation. Paul was a Christian, but he believed the law of Moses as well as the prophets. The ceremonial and judicial parts of the law were abrogated by the coming of Christ, but its positive precepts are permanent. (Hebrews 8:13; Matt. 5:17, 18.) The law is obligatory upon us as a rule of life.

(3) God has made prisons and exile the means of priceless benefits to the world. Bunyan's immortal allegory would probably never have been written, if he had not been imprisoned. What influences were started by Luther in the Wartburg; Moses in Midian; David as a refugee from Saul; Paul in Arabia; John in Patmos; Calvin in Strasburg and Basle and John Knox in Geneva! Paul was frequently in prison. (2 Cor. 11:23.)

(4) The apostle's methods of preaching were wise. He recommended virtues more than he condemned vices. Felix was unrighteous, incontinent; but the apostle did not tell him of these vices. He "reasoned" of rightness and self-control. Try this method in the Sunday-school.

(5) The Christian religion is the only religion in the world that teaches the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. In fideis can not answer the argument in favor of Christianity drawn from the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

(6) It is dangerous to disregard religious impressions. (Hebrews 6:46.) Felix trembled only once, though he had many conferences with Paul! "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in this petty pace from day to day and all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusky death."

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